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Whistleblowers say they're bullied for exposing prison abuse

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and MICHAEL R. SISAK
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP)—As the federal Bureau of Prisons faces increased scrutiny over its latest scandal — allegations staff and even a warden sexually abused inmates at a women's prison known as the "rape club" — people striving to hold it accountable say they're being attacked for speaking up. Whistleblower employees say high-ranking prison officials are bullying them for exposing wrongdoing and threatening to close the women's lockup if workers keep reporting abuse, and members of Congress say they're being stonewalled as they seek to bring greater oversight to the beleaguered bureau.

The Bureau of Prisons' proclivity for silence and secrecy has endured, workers and lawmakers say, even after an Associated Press investigation revealed years of sexual misconduct at the women's prison — the federal correctional institution in Dublin, California — and detailed a toxic culture that enabled it to continue for years. After that reporting, which included accounts of inmates being sent to solitary confinement or transferred to other prisons to silence them, workers and union leaders at the Bay Area lockup and other federal prisons say they're also being threatened for raising alarms about misconduct.

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Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., Chair of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill, Sept. 16, 2020, in Washington.

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Whistleblowers say they're bullied for exposing prison abuse

Continued from Front

At Dublin, union president Ed Canales says the acting warden, Bureau of Prisons Deputy Regional Director T. Ray Hinkle, shared Canales' confidential emails and home address with the staff after Canales complained to bureau leaders about abuse, corruption and safety issues.

At a federal prison in Mendota, California, union president Aaron McGlothlin says agency officials retaliated by reviving a frivolous disciplinary investigation after he complained about busloads of COVID-19-positive inmates being transferred to his institution.

The investigation, he said, stemmed from an erroneous complaint that he was AWOL from work when he'd actually been cleared to spend time on union matters.

At the federal prison complex in Victorville, California, workers said one official has warned them to stay away from whistleblowers or risk being jammed up with disciplinary investigations. Such threats are effective because even the lowest-level disciplinary matter can hinder a worker's move up the ranks, union officials said.

John Kostelnik, the Western region vice president for the correctional workers union, said what's happening to whistleblowers at Dublin, Mendota and Victorville is endemic of a

coverup culture deeply ingrained in Bureau of Prisons leadership — aimed more at preserving what's left of the bureau's tattered reputation than sweeping away any employee's transgressions.

Four men who've worked at Dublin have been charged with sexually abusing inmates there, including ex-Warden Ray J. Garcia, who's pleaded not guilty. Several others are under investigation.

Federal law protects whistleblower employees from retaliation, but Kostelnik said such protections don't really exist in the cloistered Bureau of Prisons, where wardens control staff discipline and people who speak up are essentially blacklisted. Bosses routinely ask would-be whistleblowers to write memos detailing problems, effectively forcing them to put down their names and compromise anonymity, Kostelnik said.

Without an anonymous, third-party reporting system like other law enforcement agencies have, federal prison whistleblowers "face a full-frontal attack when you report anything of wrongdoing in the facilities, especially if you're reporting management officials," Kostelnik said.

The AP contacted the Justice Department and the Bureau of Prisons with detailed questions about the allegations.

The Bureau of Prisons re-

sponded with a one-sentence statement, saying it "takes seriously allegations of staff misconduct, including allegations of retaliation by staff, and consistent with our national policy, those allegations are required to be reported, and when warranted, investigations are opened." Hinkle didn't respond to a text message seeking comment.

The Bureau of Prisons has been plagued by crises in recent years, many of them exposed by AP reporting, including criminal activity by employees, critically low staffing levels hampering responses to emergencies, the rapid spread of COVID-19, a failed response to the pandemic and dozens of escapes.

Last week, after AP's reporting on Dublin, the Senate launched a bipartisan working group to scrutinize conditions within the Bureau of Prisons, and Wednesday the leaders of the Senate Judiciary Committee wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland demanding he take immediate action to reform the bureau.

The bureau's treatment of whistleblowers and its resistance to transparency, as documented by workers and lawmakers, has only invited more scrutiny.

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., who visited Dublin last week after reading AP's investigation, says she's taking a larger congressional contingent to inspect the



Attorney General Merrick Garland speaks during a news conference, Feb. 22, 2022 at the Justice Department in Washington.

Associated Press

prison after Hinkle prevented her from speaking one-on-one with inmates and staff.

"When I read the article, I was both astonished and disgusted," Speier said in an interview. "I wanted to go and visit to determine for myself what the circumstances were. I would categorize the visit as woefully inadequate and unsatisfactory."

Speier said she won't stop until the Bureau of Prisons faces significant oversight and will "go to the highest levels of the Justice Department and the White House if necessary, to make sure we have the access we want."

During her visit, Speier said, Hinkle tried to block her from speaking with several inmates who reported abuse and instead sent her to speak with others he'd picked. She said he dismiss-

ively called sexual abuse committed by employees "an embarrassment."

Speier said she told him: "This isn't an embarrassment. This is a toxic work environment. It is a reprehensible set of circumstances." Afterward, in an email to Dublin staff obtained by the AP, Hinkle alleged Speier "mistreated" prison workers and treated one employee "as though she had committed a crime."

"I can only assume the Congresswoman was referring to a recent AP article that painted our institution in broad strokes," Hinkle wrote in the email. "Although I recognize her right to believe what she believes, I do not recognize her right to blindly categorize all the hard working staff at FCI Dublin who choose to be law-abiding public servants every single day they report to duty." □

Miami Beach to limit some alcohol sales during spring break

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. (AP) —

An alcohol ban designed to curb heavy late night drinking among spring breakers in Miami Beach will be in effect for two weeks in March, officials said.

Miami Beach City Commissioners voted Wednesday to prohibit the sale and consumption of alcohol after 2 a.m. between March 7 and March 21 along the city's entertainment district, commonly referred to as South Beach, the Miami Herald reported.

The current last call is 6 a.m. for alcohol sales throughout much of the city.

Commissioners voted 4-3 despite pleas from nightclub operators and employees who argued that a ban would cost them money while creating an unfair advantage for clubs,



City of Miami Beach code enforcement and police officers patrol along Ocean Drive, Friday, Sept. 24, 2021, in Miami Beach, Fla.

Associated Press

restaurants and hotels in other parts of the city, the newspaper reported.

"It's just picking winners and losers.

It's wrong," said Jimmy Resnick, the landlord for South Beach club Exchange Miami.

Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber and commissioners favoring the ban said it is necessary to free up police resources and ensure public safety during the height of spring break.

Some residents also spoke in favor of the ban.

Spring break brought large crowds to Miami Beach last year, and the city enforced an 8 p.m. curfew to cut down on disorder.

"For the hardship it may deliver, I'm sorry," Gelber said.

"But from our point of view, going through that two-week period ... is a danger to the public. It's a proven danger to the public." □

Biden hits Russia with new sanctions, says Putin 'chose' war

By **AAMER MADHANI, ZEKE MILLER and ELLEN KNICKMEYER**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden ordered broad new sanctions targeting Russia on Thursday after its invasion of Ukraine, declaring that Russian leader Vladimir Putin "chose this war" and his country will bear the consequences. The sanctions target Russian banks, oligarchs and high-tech sectors, Biden said. The United States and its allies will block assets of four large Russian banks, impose export controls and sanction oligarchs.

Biden also said the U.S. will be deploying additional forces to Germany to bolster NATO after the invasion of Ukraine, which is not a member of the defense organization. Approximately 7,000 additional U.S. troops will be sent.

The penalties fall in line with the White House's insistence that it would hit Russia's financial system and Putin's inner circle, while also imposing export controls that would aim to starve Russia's industries and military of U.S. semiconductors and other high-tech products. "Putin is the aggressor,"

Biden said. "Putin chose this war, and now he and his country will bear the consequences."

Biden, for now, held off imposing some of the most severe potential sanctions, including cutting Russia out of the SWIFT payment system, which allows for the transfers of money from bank to bank around the globe. Biden announced the sanctions at the White House while Ukraine's government reported mounting casualties inflicted by Russian forces attacking from the east, north and south. Oil and natural prices have already surged over concerns that Russia -- an energy production behemoth -- will slow the flow of oil and natural gas to Europe. Biden, however, acknowledged the sanctions are "going to take time" to have their effect on the Russian economy.

He also acknowledged that the invasion -- and efforts to thwart Putin--will have a cost for Americans. But he sought to reassure that the economic pain that may come with rising energy prices will be short lived for them.

As for Putin, he said, "He's going to test the resolve of

the West to see if we stay together, and we will."

Biden spoke hours after holding a virtual meeting with the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Italy and Japan. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg also joined the meeting.

The president also met with his national security team in the White House Situation Room as he looked to flesh out U.S. moves in the rapidly escalating crisis.

While Biden described the sanctions as severe, Ukrainian officials urged the U.S. and West to go further and cut the Russians from the SWIFT financial system.

"We demand the disconnection of Russia from SWIFT, the introduction of a no-fly zone over Ukraine and other effective steps to stop the aggressor," Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a tweet.

The Biden administration, however, has shown some reluctance to cut Russia from SWIFT, at least immediately, because of concerns the move could also have enormous ramifications for Europe and other Western



President Joe Biden speaks about the Russian invasion of Ukraine in the East Room of the White House, Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022, in Washington.

Associated Press

economies. Biden, answering questions from reporters, appeared to push a decision on SWIFT to European allies.

"It is always an option but right now that's not the position that the rest of Europe wishes to take," Biden said. He also contended that the financial sanctions he announced would be more damaging to Russia.

The Belgium-headquartered system allows for tens of millions of transactions daily among banks, financial exchanges and other institutions. The U.S. notably has previously blocked Iran from the system because of its nuclear program.

Officials in Europe have noted that the loss of SWIFT access by Russia could be a drag on the broader global economy. Russia has also equated a SWIFT ban to a declaration of war. And because the system cements the importance of the U.S. dollar in global finance, outright bans also carry the risk of pushing countries to use alternatives through the Chinese government or blockchain-based technologies. Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell expressed support Thursday and also urged Biden to apply maximum pressure on Putin. □

Rocky Mountain states to team up on hydrogen tech proposal

By **MEAD GRUVER**

Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. (AP) —

Four Rocky Mountain states will cooperate on developing ways to make the most abundant element in the universe, hydrogen, more available and useful as clean-burning fuel for cars, trucks and trains, the states' governors announced Thursday.

Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming will plan a "hydrogen hub" to be built somewhere in the region, drawing from \$8 billion in recently approved federal infrastructure funding for four or more such regional hubs in the U.S.

"This coalition represents a shared vision for the future of hydrogen in the Mountain West region," Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon said in a joint statement with governors Jared Polis of Colorado, Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico and Spencer Cox of Utah.

The Western Inter-State Hydrogen Hub will have facilities in all four states under plans to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Energy, according to an agreement signed Wednesday. Goals will include econom-



In this photo taken Nov. 17, 2014, a Toyota Motor Corp.'s new hydrogen fuel cell vehicle Mirai arrives at a charge station near Toyota's showroom in Tokyo.

Associated Press

ic development and the "latest science, research and technology for cost-effective generation, transportation, and use of clean hydrogen," the states' agreement said.

Hydrogen has long been eyed as an abundant, clean fuel. Companies including major auto manufacturers have been developing hydrogen-fueled cars, trucks, buses and trains. Hydrogen can be

derived from water using an electric current and when burned emits only water vapor as a byproduct. The fuel could theoretically reduce greenhouse emissions and air pollution, depending on how it's obtained.

As with electric vehicles, however, hydrogen's potential has been limited by infrastructure. Lack of fueling stations limits the market for hydrogen-fueled vehi-

cles. Few hydrogen-fueled vehicles limits investment in producing and moving hydrogen.

In New Mexico, Lujan Grisham, a Democrat, has amid criticism pushed aggressively to attract private investment and federal dollars for hydrogen production and distribution.

"Hydrogen is coming everywhere in the country," Lujan Grisham said last week at the close of the state's an-

nual legislative session. "My job is to make sure we have the right safeguards and effort." Critics point out that as it's now produced, hydrogen isn't green, carbon-free or unlimited. Currently nearly all hydrogen commercially produced in the U.S. comes not from water but natural gas, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

While advocates say using fossil fuels to produce hydrogen now can help to develop a clean industry later, environmentalists are skeptical. "It's essentially a push for expanded oil and gas development. More oil and gas development is completely at odds with the need to confront the climate crisis and drastically reduce our dependence on fossil fuels," Jeremy Nichols with the Santa Fe, New Mexico-based environmental group WildEarth Guardians said by email.

Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming rank seventh, eighth and ninth, respectively, for U.S. onshore gas production. Utah also is significant gas-producing state, according to the Energy Information Administration. □

Big interest in wind energy off NY, NJ in largest U.S. auction



This Feb. 18, 2022 photo shows land-based windmills in Atlantic City N.J. that help power a sewage treatment plant.

Associated Press

By **WAYNE PARRY**

Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) —

The largest auction of offshore wind sites in the nation's history is drawing strong interest from companies in an indication of

the industry's potential.

By Thursday afternoon, the second day of the auction by the U.S. Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, bids had exceeded \$2.6 billion on six tracts of ocean floor off New York and New Jer-

sey in an area known as the New York Bight.

When fully developed, these sites could provide enough energy to power 2 million homes, the agency said. More than \$1.5 billion worth of bids were received Wednesday, the first day of the auction, and officials said it is possible bidding could extend into a third day, given the strong response thus far.

The response to the auction "shows that the offshore wind industry has truly arrived," said Doug O'Malley, director of Environment New Jersey, adding that it "proves that clean renewable energy off the Jersey Shore is poised to enter a boom period."

The auction for nearly 500,000 acres (about 202,342 hectares), when combined with past auc-

tions, will span nearly 1 million acres. It was the largest such auction in the nation's history, BOEM said.

President Joe Biden has set a goal to install 30 gigawatts of offshore wind power by 2030, generating enough electricity to power more than 10 million homes. The administration has approved the nation's first two commercial-scale offshore wind projects in federal waters: the 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind project off the Massachusetts coast and the 130-megawatt South Fork wind farm near New York's Long Island.

Not everyone is delighted with the scope and speed of offshore wind development. Homeowners groups in several spots in New Jersey are opposing the projects on environmental,

economic and aesthetic grounds. "COA supports responsible and reasonable offshore wind energy, but this is a reckless privatization, and will not ensure protection of marine life including whales, dolphins, turtles and the hundreds of other species that call the ocean home," the group said.

Cindy Zipf, the group's executive director, said the auction area is five times the size of New York City. Five of the six tracts are located off the central or southern coasts of New Jersey. The largest, at over 114,000 acres (about 46,134 hectares), is located off the coast of Long Beach Island, and could generate enough electricity to power nearly half a million homes, according to the ocean energy bureau. □

Chernobyl no-go zone targeted as Russia invades Ukraine

By JIM HEINTZ

Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — It was among the most worrying developments on an already shocking day, as Russia invaded Ukraine on Thursday: warfare at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, where radioactivity is still leaking from history's worst nuclear disaster 36 years ago.

Russian forces took control over the site after a fierce battle with Ukrainian national guards protecting the decommissioned plant, Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak told The Associated Press. The condition of the plant's facilities, a confinement shelter and a repository for nuclear waste is unknown, he said.

An official familiar with current assessments said Russian shelling hit a radioactive waste repository at Chernobyl, and an increase in radiation levels was reported. The increase could not be immediately corroborated.

A senior American intelligence official said the U.S. believes Russian forces at Chernobyl were aiming to push to Kyiv, about 130 kilometers (80 miles) south of the plant, to try to link with other Russian forces



A Soviet-era top secret object Duga, an over-the-horizon radar system once used as part of the Soviet missile defense early-warning radar network, seen behind a radioactivity sign in Chernobyl, Ukraine, on Nov. 22, 2018.

throughout Ukraine. The officials were not authorized to be publicly named discussing the sensitive matter. The Chernobyl Exclusion Zone, a 2,600-square-kilometer (1,000-square-mile) zone of forest surrounding the shuttered plant, lies between the Belarus-Ukraine border and the Ukrainian capital. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukrainian officers fought to defend it, "so that the tragedy of 1986 will not be repeated." He called it a "declaration of war against the whole of

Europe."

Adviser Podolyak said that after an "absolutely senseless attack ... it is impossible to say that the Chernobyl nuclear power plant is safe." He warned that Russian authorities could blame Ukraine for damage to the site or stage provocations from there. Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Herashenko warned that any attack on the waste repository could send radioactive dust over "the territory of Ukraine, Belarus and countries of the

EU."

Russian officials, who have revealed little of their operations in Ukraine and not revealed their goals, did not publicly comment on the battle.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it is following the situation in Ukraine "with grave concern" and appealed for maximum restraint to avoid any action that may put Ukraine's nuclear facilities at risk.

Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA's general director,

said Ukraine has informed the Vienna-based agency that "unidentified armed forces" have taken control of all facilities at the plant and that there had been no casualties or destruction at the industrial site. Grossi said it is "of vital importance that the safe and secure operations of the nuclear facilities in that zone should not be affected or disrupted in any way."

In an interview, Lyman said he is most worried about spent fuel stored at the site, which has not been active since 2000. If the power to cooling pumps is disrupted or fuel-storage tanks are damaged, the results could be catastrophic, he said.

Reactor No. 4 at the power plant exploded and caught fire deep in the night on April 26, 1986, shattering the building and spewing radioactive material high into the sky.

Soviet authorities made the catastrophe even worse by failing to tell the public what had happened, angering European governments and the Soviet people. The 2 million residents of Kyiv weren't informed despite the fallout danger, and the world learned of the disaster only after heightened radiation was detected in Sweden. □

Associated Press

Japan, China spar over Japan diplomat's detention in Beijing

By MARI YAMAGUCHI

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday it has lodged a strong protest and demanded an apology after its diplomat was detained and questioned by authorities in Beijing.

The diplomat from the Japanese Embassy was seized while on duty and held for several hours on Monday, the Foreign Ministry said.

The diplomat was carrying out his legitimate work and the detention violated the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which stipulates the immunity of diplomats from civil and criminal jurisdiction of the host nation, the ministry said.

The diplomat, whose name and other details were not disclosed, was released later Monday, a ministry official said on condition of

anonymity, citing protocol. There was no sign the diplomat was physically abused while he was being interrogated, the official said.

Vice Foreign Minister Takeo Mori on Tuesday summoned Yang Yu, charge d'affaires and China's interim ambassador in Tokyo, demanding China offer an apology and avoid such situations in the future.

In Beijing on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying told reporters that "China has made a stern complaint with Japan, urging it to respect China's law, strictly restrain its consular staff in China and prevent such incidents from happening again."

She said the Japanese diplomat had engaged in activities "inconsistent with their capacity in China" and that the relevant Chinese departments con-

ducted investigations and questioning "in accordance with the law and regulation." No other details were provided.

Last week, Japan's government said its national in his 50s had been detained in Shanghai since December over unspecified law violations, but gave no further details.

There have been several other cases of arrests in the past involving Japanese citizens who had businesses or connections with China over allegations including spying, but cases against diplomats or government officials are extremely rare. In 2002, a Japanese defense attache was held by Chinese authorities for several hours. □



A man walks by a motorist near a globe sculpture displayed outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office in Beijing, Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022.

Associated Press

AP sources: Yemen's Houthis seize another U.S. Embassy staffer

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and SAMY MAGDY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels have detained another official of the long-closed U.S. Embassy there, bringing the number of local ex-U.S. Embassy staffers in the rebel group's custody to at least 11, according to accounts from Yemeni officials and others. The Houthis, an Iran-backed group that controls the capital, Sanaa, and much of Yemen's north, took into custody a former press officer from the U.S. Embassy last week, according to a rights lawyer in Sanaa, Abdel-Majeed Sabra, and a family member of a detainee. The family member spoke on condition of anonymity because of the fear of reprisals.

Sabra said the former embassy press officer was being held in the Houthi-run Security and Intelligence Authority facility. It's not known whether Houthis have charged the man or any other of the detainees from the U.S. Embassy staff, he said.

Sabra said the latest staffer was detained a month after the rebel group arrested his former deputy at the embassy.

Houthi rebels brought the



Armed Houthi fighters attend the funeral procession of Houthi rebel fighters who were killed in recent fighting with forces of Yemen's internationally recognized government, in Sanaa, Yemen, on Nov. 24, 2021.

latest embassy staffer back to his home on Tuesday to search it, and took him away again.

The State Department said in an email to The Associated Press this week that the U.S. government was "unceasing" in efforts to secure the release of the local embassy staffers.

Washington shut down its embassy in Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula's poorest nation, in 2015, as conflict fractured the country. Houthis had swept down from their base in the north

the year before at a time of mounting political upheaval, seizing the capital and other territory. A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia entered the war in 2015.

Houthis, with increasing support from Iran, have been able to hold off the Saudi-led military coalition. U.N. and aid agencies call the overall situation in Yemen the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with millions of Yemenis vulnerable to famine.

Houthis have rebuffed repeated attempts by the

Biden administration to get them into peace talks, and accuse the U.S. of supporting the coalition.

Houthis seized the headquarters of the U.S. Embassy last October. They detained dozens of former staffers, many of whom were later released.

With the latest detention, at least 11 staffers from the closed embassy remain in Houthi custody, however, according to a security official and a family member of the detainees. The official spoke on condition of

Associated Press

anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly, and the family member for fear of reprisal. U.N. agencies confirmed late last year that the Houthis also had arrested two of their employees in Sanaa in early November. UNESCO and the U.N. human rights office said no legal grounds were given for their detention.

The new detention comes as the Biden administration is considering redesignating the Houthis or individual Houthi leaders as terrorists, a step that carries harsh U.S. government penalties for those doing business with them.

That's after Houthis stepped up cross-border attacks by drone and missiles on the United Arab Emirates, in the wake of suffering heavy territorial losses in fighting.

The U.S. deepened sanctions Wednesday on what it said was an illicit, Iran-aligned smuggling network helping to fund the Houthis, but appeared to stop short of the terrorist designation. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are pushing for the terrorist designation. Some Americans and Yemenis argue it could deter Houthis in attacks and help push them into peace talks. □

Pakistan court sentences man to death over woman's beheading

By MUNIR AHMED

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A Pakistani court sentenced a man from a prominent in-

dustrialist family to death on Thursday, after finding him guilty of beheading a childhood friend who had refused to marry him.

The ruling will likely be appealed. Zahir Jaffar's killing of Noor Mukadam last year shocked the country and drew nationwide condemnation, with the subsequent trial widely covered in the media. The verdict was quickly hailed by civil society groups.

The prosecution had alleged that Jaffar, 30, had a long-running friendship with Mukadam, 27, the daughter of a diplomat, but she rejected his romantic advances.

Prosecutors said Mukadam leapt from a window at Jaffar's home in an upscale area of Islamabad last July when Jaffar refused to accept her rejection. He ordered a security guard

and a cook to capture her before he killed her, prosecutors said. A video that surfaced on social media at the time showed Jaffar dragging her back to his home.

Jaffar raped Mukadam before brutally murdering her, police said in reports submitted to the court during the trial. Mukadam had gone to Jaffar's house to say goodbye as he was planning to travel abroad. Jaffar has both Pakistani and American citizenship. The court also sentenced two domestic workers to 10 years' prison time each for complicity in the killing.

Mukadam's family and friends along with human rights activists organized

a movement around her death, demanding justice, holding candlelight vigils, and launching a social media campaign, #justiceforNoor. The trial shed light on the pervasiveness of violence against women in Pakistan, which usually affects the lower and middle classes. Hundreds of women are killed in Pakistan each year in similar cases, and the numbers of those subjected to violence and sexual assaults are growing. Mukadam's father, Shaukat Ali, welcomed the verdict, saying he would issue a detailed statement after fully reading the court's ruling. There was no immediate comment from Jaffar's family. □



Police officers escort Zahir Jaffar, center, the man accused in the brutal killing last year of Noor Mukadam, a 27-year-old daughter of a Pakistani diplomat, for a court appearance, in Islamabad, Pakistan, Thursday, Feb. 24, 2022.

Associated Press

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SCAN TO LEARN MORE

U.N. food agency says 13 million Yemenis may face starvation

By MAAD AL-ZIKRY
Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen (AP) — The head of the U.N. food agency has warned that 13 million Yemenis are headed for starvation due to a protracted civil conflict and a lack of funding for humanitarian aid. In an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, David Beasley said that Yemen was “in a very bad situation” with more than 40 percent of the population already relying on food supplies from the World Food Program. “We’re feeding 13 million people out of a nation of 30 million people, and we are running out of money,” Beasley said, speaking from the capital, Sanaa. Since the pandemic hit, more people have been

facing the threat of starvation globally, which put tremendous pressures on the WFP, Beasley said. Now, 285 million people around the world face the threat of starvation, which makes it more difficult to attend to Yemen’s needs, he added. “We’ve got twice the number of people struggling around the world now,” Beasley said. “So, what am I gonna do for the children in Yemen? Steal it from the children in Ethiopia, or Afghanistan, or Nigeria or in Syria? That’s not right,” he added. Beasley said his agency was forced to cut rations in half for eight million Yemenis due to the shortage of funds. “We may be cutting those down to zero. What do you think will happen? people will die. It will be catastrophic,” he

said. According to the UN food agency, around 811 million people do not have enough food across the globe, and an estimated 45 million people in 43 countries are at risk of famine. Beasley said the WFP needs an extra 9 billion dollars to meet the rising demand for food aid around the world. “The \$430 trillion worth of wealth in the world today, there should not be a single child dying anywhere on earth,” he contended. Yemen has been fighting a civil war since 2014, when Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital of Sanaa and much of the northern part of the country, forcing the government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition



In this Nov. 23, 2019 file photo, a malnourished newborn baby lies in an incubator at the Al-Sabeen Hospital in Sanaa, Yemen. Associated Press

entered the war in March 2015, backed by the United States, to try to restore Hadi and his internationally recognized government to power. Despite a relentless air campaign and ground fighting, the war has deteriorated largely into a stalemate and caused a humanitarian crisis. The U.S. has since suspended its direct involvement in the conflict. □

Nicaragua convicts 7 more opposition leaders of “conspiracy”

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Nicaraguan judges on Wednesday convicted seven opposition leaders, including former high-level Sandinistas and three former presidential contenders, of

“conspiracy to undermine national integrity.” A spokesperson for the Civic Alliance opposition coalition said the seven included Félix Maradiaga, Juan Sebastián Chamorro

and the Central American country’s former ambassador to the United States, Arturo Cruz Sequeira. All three had been planning to run in the Nov. 7 presidential elections before the government of President Daniel Ortega arrested them and around 40 other opponents. With all of them in custody, Ortega cruised to winning a fourth consecutive presidential term in November elections widely criticized by the international community. The string of recent trials of opposition figures has been carried out in the infamous Chipote prison. The defendants have only been permitted to have their lawyers present. □



Opposition legislator Victor Hugo Tinoco, of the Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS) gestures before the National Assembly votes to amend the Nicaraguan Constitution to include eliminating presidential term limits in Managua, Nicaragua, Jan. 28, 2014. Associated Press

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Travellers' Choice 2020

Minister Endy Croes surprised Family Botta in connection with El Gaucho Restaurant's 45 years of existence

ORANJESTAD: Thursday afternoon Family Botta received a pleasant surprise visit from Minister Endy Croes in connection with El Gaucho Restaurant's 45 years anniversary where he handed over a special recognition in the name of the Government.

"A great thank you for always believing in the economy of Aruba and for offering tremendous job opportunities for our



people in your prestigious restaurant". Following with how hard the 'Gaucho' family has worked all throughout the years to reach 45 years of existence and excellent reputation in the F&B industry on the island. "We are beyond proud of each and every one of you. Thank you for your great contribution to the development and economy of our island".

El Gaucho Restaurant is a well known Argentinian steak restaurant on the island. From sizzling beef, house baked cheese bread and garlic mashed potatoes, the options are wild all while accompanied by the best homemade sangria on the island. Combine this with great ambiance and supreme staff you are guaranteed to experience a fabulous dinner night. It is recommended to make reservations although walk-ins are welcome as well.

El Gaucho Restaurant is open from Tuesday till Sunday from 11.30am - 11.00pm.



For reservation call +297 583-3677 or email riri@elgaucho-aruba.com or visit the website www.elgaucho-aruba.com

Great weekend for tourism in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – In January 2022, the Government of Aruba announced the exit strategy to go back to normal.

This exit strategy is essential for the recovery of Aruba's tourism. The government changed the entry policy was changed to attract more visitors. The Omicron variant impacted Aruba's tourism, and its repercussions were felt in January 2022. The forecast for tourism in 2022 was a recovery between 85% and 100% compared to tourism in 2019, Aruba's best year for tourism ever.

A highlight for January 2022 was the fact that although the decline in the number of visitors, there was a 79% recovery of the tourism receipt, which is the most important indicator to measure the quality of visitors. Last week, the Government of Aruba announced its decision to go back to normal and stopped all Covid19

restrictions. It will help the government focus on the recovery of tourism and the economy and create new opportunities that Aruba needs.

On Saturday, February 19, 2022, 5316 visitors arrived at the airport, of which 4384 were from the USA, our biggest and most important tourism market. On Sunday, February 20, 2022, the Celebrity Reflection and Celebrity Constellation cruise ships arrived at the Port loaded with visitors. The airline's load factor is increasing and is reaching 70% already, and the airlines are keeping the seating capacity that they reserved for Aruba. It shows the confidence that these airlines have in the product Aruba. The Minister of Tourism, Dangui Oduber is pleased with the number of visitors arriving at the airport and the Port during the past weekend. It was a good weekend for taxi drivers, tour operators, restaurants, and stores.

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36th edition of Aruba International Half Marathon to take place in march

(ORANJESTAD) - Last year it was held virtually because of the pandemic, and this year it is expected that a thousand people and international athletes will participate.

This according to William Erasmus, who works as deputy chief of Sport en Beweiging, who also informed that Aruba International Half Marathon is going to be the opening for 'One Healthy Day', which is a whole day of physical activity, sport and health.

One Healthy Day will take place on March 20th, with activities held around the whole island for free, during which people can try

out different activities like yoga, training, dancing, and sport among others. Taking into account that the event was canceled for two years because of the pandemic, and at this moment, because of flexibilization of related restrictions and also because of the decrease in active cases of Covid-19, Aruba International Half Marathon will be back for the 20th of May. The starting point will be Joe Laveist Sport Park in San Nicolas and the race will finish in Alhambra.

It will consist of an individual competition of Half Marathon of 21 kilometer. This year will include a new category, a duo in which each

participant runs 10.5 kilometer. There will also be a corporate category and a relay of four people – here each participant must be from the same company or organization. There will also be a student relay with four participants, each running 5.25km. The duo is for people older than 17, and the student relay for people 12 years and up. Registration is possible online with virtual payment. It's also possible to go personally to IBISA from 8am to 4pm and pay cash, or register at Patrishi Sports from Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. The window to register and pay to participate in the race will be on 15, 16 and 17th of March. Eras-



mus pointed out that participants will each receive a medal of completion, a dry-fit T-shirt, and during the race there will be points of

hydration available. At the end of the race, participants will receive a package with their medal, fruit, and also soup to finish the activity.

As every year, there is an option to pick up the race package on the 19th of March at Alhambra, from 9am to 3pm.

From 4am there will be buses available to facilitate transportation for participants from Alhambra to Joe Laveist Sport Park so they can take place in the race. There will also be option for transportation for relay teams at their pick up stations to bring them to the finish spot.

Erasmus finished by saying that this year, there will be four international athletes participating in the race.

For more information visit their website onehealthy-youaruba.com.



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Claims on the private sector surged due to growth in loans to enterprises and housing mortgages

Summary of the Monthly Bulletin of December 2021.

Monetary developments

Compared to November 2021, money supply expanded by Afl. 114.6 million to Afl. 5,368.1 million in December 2021, resulting from growth in both net domestic assets (+Afl. 109.7 million) and net foreign assets (+Afl. 4.8 million). The surge in the domestic component of money supply was caused by an expansion in domestic credit (+Afl. 114.7 million) and a decrease in non-credit related balance sheet items (-Afl. 4.9 million). The growth in domestic credit resulted from increases in net claims of the banking sector on the public sector (+Afl. 101.8 million) and claims of the banking sector on the private sector (+Afl. 12.9 million). The rise in net claims of the banking sector on the public sector was the result of a drop in government deposits (-Afl. 104.4 million), while the increase in claims of the banking sector on the private sector was caused by growth in loans to enterprises (+Afl. 10.0 million) and housing mortgages (+Afl. 8.3

million). In contrast, consumer credit (-Afl. 5.4 million) decreased.

In December 2021, the expansion in net foreign assets of the banking sector was due to net purchases of foreign exchange of Afl. 302.6 million from the public, mostly related to foreign exchange revenue from tourism exports and net transfers to foreign accounts. These were almost completely offset by net sales of foreign exchange of Afl. 297.8 million to the public, mainly associated with payments for goods imports and other services.

Inflation

The consumer price index (CPI) for December 2021 noted a 3.6 percent rise year-over-year (YOY) compared to a 3.1 percent increase (YOY) for November 2021. The main contributor to this increase was the "Transport" component. The 12-month average inflation rate was 0.7 percent in December 2021, compared to 0.2 percent in November 2021.

Government

Total government revenue amounted to Afl. 127.7 million in December 2021, Afl. 10.5 million more than the same month of the previous year. The rise in government revenue resulted from increases in tax revenue (+Afl. 9.6 million) and nontax revenue (+Afl. 1.0 million). The growth in tax revenue was mainly driven by expansion in income from import duties (+Afl. 5.4 million) and turnover tax (B.B.O./B.A.V.P) (+Afl. 5.1 million). In contrast, income from profit tax (-Afl. 12.7 million) decreased.

Tourism

The number of stay-over visitors amounted to 89,541 in December 2021, which is 11,172 less visitors (-11.1 percent) than in December 2019. The North American market, the Latin American market, and the European market declined by 9,329 visitors (-11.4 percent), 1,579 visitors (-18.7 percent), and 294 visitors (-3.9 percent), respectively.

Centrale Bank van Aruba
February 24, 2022

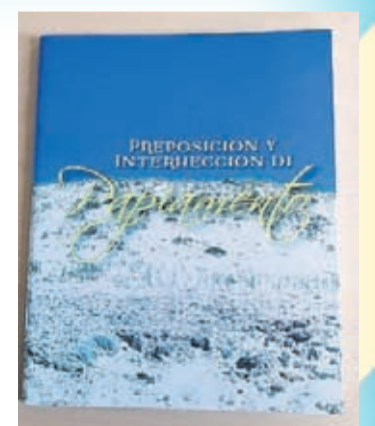
The 14th "Arte di Palabra" will take place on April 2, 2022

ORANJESTAD –The Department of Culture Aruba (DCA) is once more organizing the "Arte di Palabra" competition in which participants compete in storytelling, writing, and declaiming poetry. Registration is exclusively for students of secondary schools and is open.

Arte di Palabra (Word art) is a competition between secondary school students from Curacao, Bonaire, and Aruba. This year, the DCA will be organizing the 14th edition of the Arte di Palabra contest at the Cas di Cultura on April 2, 2022. The competition objective is to allow the students to show their literary creativ-

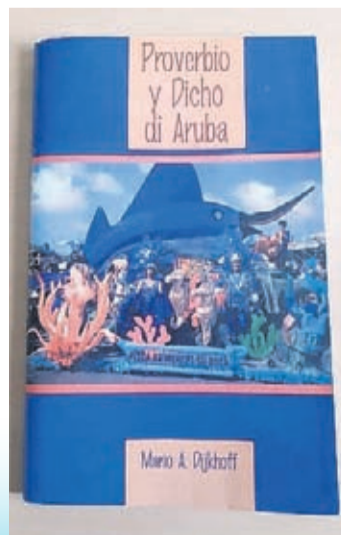
ity. The goal is to promote the reading and writing in Papiamentu, to stimulate the publication of literary art in Papiamentu, and to promote cultural exchange between the youth of the ABC islands. The DCA works together with the "Aruba Papiamentu Corrector Foundation".

With the Arte di Palabra competition, they want to stimulate the use of Papiamentu correctly through their poetry or short stories to enrich their knowledge of our language. When publishing cultural information the DCA ensures that it is written in correct Papiamentu. The DCA uses the Orthographic Vocabulary in Papiamentu 2019 to correct its official publications. A language is considered essential in unifying culture. Grammar books Papiamentu-Grammar books PapiamentuLanguage carries all thoughts and human experience, culture, and identity. For DCA, Papiamentu is an essential element in their cultural education. Additionally, orthography, language, literature in our



native language are symbols of our identity. Only by making Papiamentu official it can be appreciated and serve as encouragement for everyone to learn about the history of our native language and promote the correct use in speech and writing.

The focus of the DCA and the Ministry of Culture is to promote the correct use of Papiamentu. □



Balancing hopes, dreams and a low-paying college major

By ANNA HELHOSKI of NerdWallet

Humanities majors are more than a punchline. Not everyone can or wants to be a STEM major, and the world would be a poorer place if they were.

To have great things to read, music that inspires, perspectives that challenge us — to have a sense of reward and meaning in life — we must have students who pursue college degrees that don't lead directly to a big paycheck.

That turns the pursuit of intellectual curiosity and artistic appreciation into a balancing act: the likelihood you'll make a good living versus the debt you incur along the way.

"I encourage students to find this balance between what they like and what pays," says Nicole Smith, research professor and chief economist at the Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce. "I'm not discounting how beneficial these positions are to our society as a whole, but if you can't pay back your student loan, you'll be in a serious state," Smith says.

Liberal arts grads face longer odds compared with science, technology, engineering and mathematics degrees, but a well-chosen humanities major doesn't have to be a vow of poverty.



In this Thursday, Nov. 29, 2018, photo students and passers-by walk past an entrance to Boston University College of Arts and Sciences in Boston.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOUP WHAT YOU PAID?

To assess the value of earning a specific degree at a specific institution, consider the concept of price-to-earnings premium, spearheaded by Michael Itzkowitz, senior fellow of higher education at Third Way, a center-left think tank.

It measures what you pay out of pocket, including loans, against the amount you'll earn each year above the earnings of a typical high school graduate. The results show how quickly you can get a return on investment in your college major.

The majority of liberal arts degrees lead to a "pretty good ROI," says Itzkowitz, but the specific program you graduate with and the type of degree you earn will affect individual outcomes.

The bachelor's degree programs that allow graduates to recoup their costs within five years or less include what you'd expect: Registered nursing, electrical engineering and dental assistants all make the list.

Among the programs with no economic ROI at all: drama, fine arts and anthropology.

Itzkowitz says the major-

ity of college programs enable students to recoup costs within 10 years or less. "College is still worth it the vast majority of the time," he says. Unfortunately, his research also found nearly one-quarter of all college programs of study show graduates failing to recoup their costs in the 20 years after graduation.

There are several tools that can help you compare data on costs, earnings and debt:

— The College Scorecard, a data tool from the U.S. Department of Education.

— An interactive map of price-to-earnings premiums

from Third Way.

— The Buyer Beware tool from the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce.

Of course, education and major aren't the only predictors of income. Your wages will also be affected by where you live, your gender and race, whether you work in the public or private sector, and your experience level.

SHOULD YOU GET A GRADUATE DEGREE?

Your humanities degree could go much further if you get an advanced degree — generally, the more education you have, the greater your earnings, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

But you should continue to weigh cost versus benefit since it's also easier to rack up debt. A graduate degree may increase your earning potential, or it may just increase your debt.

For example, if you majored in liberal arts for your bachelor's degree you can expect a median annual wage of \$50,000, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But if you get a graduate degree in law, taking on more debt, you could earn a median of \$126,930. A master's of fine arts, on the other hand, is unlikely to yield higher earnings: The annual median wage is \$42,000. □

Associated Press

Fewest Americans collecting unemployment aid since 1970

By MATT OTT
AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans collecting unemployment benefits fell to a 52-year low after another decline in jobless aid applications last week.

Jobless claims fell by 17,000, from 249,000 to 232,000 for the week ending Feb. 19, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

The four-week average for claims, which compensates for weekly volatility, fell by 7,250 to 236,250. It was the third straight week

of declines after rising for five straight weeks as the omicron variant of the coronavirus spread, disrupting business in many parts of the U.S.

In total, 1,476,000 Americans were collecting jobless aid the week that ended Feb. 5, a decrease of about 112,000 from the previous week and the lowest level since March 14, 1970, the government said. First-time applications for jobless aid generally track the pace of layoffs, which are back down to fairly healthy pre-pandemic

levels. Earlier this month, the Labor Department reported a surprising burst of hiring in January, with employers adding 467,000 jobs. It also revised upward its estimate for job gains in November and December by a combined 709,000. The unemployment rate edged up to a still-low 4% from 3.9%, as more people began looking for work, but not all of them securing jobs right away.

A winter spike in coronavirus infections briefly tripped up the country's rebound from 2020's virus-caused



Employers manned booths with banners promoting their companies benefits, free logo branded swag and listed salary pay scales and in some cases recruitment bonuses in order to entice job applicants to approach their booths during the Lee County Area Job Fair in Tupelo, Miss., Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021.

Associated Press

recession, but employers appear confident in long-

term growth and are eager to hire.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 37 Injury
 - 1 Caesar soother subject
 - 6 Fancy bird neckwear
 - 11 Stand pigs fly
 - 12 Pound wide awake resident
 - 13 Out of style calendar entry
 - 14 Lazy uncovers sort
 - 15 They hold moves power
 - 16 Writer quickly Brown
 - 18 Bullring dueling cry
 - 19 Swelled sword head
 - 20 Galoot fruit
 - 21 Surgeon Omaha is eggs on it
 - 22 Finds cart puller items
 - 24 Light sewing items
 - 25 Took milk choice
 - 27 Milk alter, as a program
 - 32 Lot sight
 - 33 Through Stout
 - 34 Writer Bordeaux bud
 - 35 Musical ability

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Yesterday's answer

- 7 Lawn
- 27 Egyptian emblem
- 8 Moab is on it
- 28 Joe's veep
- 9 Spotted cat
- 30 Respectable
- 10 Low cards
- 31 Brings to bear
- 17 Neighbor of Germany
- 33 Air outlets
- 23 Total
- 39 Before, in odes
- 24 Ab's neighbor
- 41 Longoria of TV
- 26 Intelligent

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44					45				

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-25 CRYPTOQUOTE
Z C V S M G K O H Y S H Y H I Z H D .
V S M K T H K E Q Q S F H Z Y Q G H
D K I H E T H W Z B K I H Y Q Z Y
T H X K T W Q S C T Z H Y W D .

— H U F I T Q G M F F K T W
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: WHAT HAPPENS IS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS HOW YOU REACT TO WHAT HAPPENS. — THADDEUS GOLAS

As 'stealth omicron' advances, scientists are learning more

By LAURA UNGAR
AP Science Writer

The coronavirus mutant widely known as "stealth omicron" is now causing more than a third of new omicron cases around the world, but scientists still don't know how it could affect the future of the pandemic.

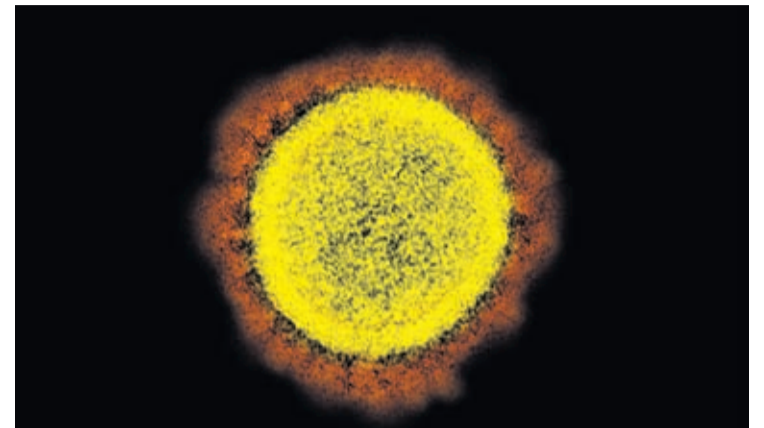
Researchers are slowly revealing clues about the strain, a descendant of omicron known as BA.2, while warily watching it become ever more prevalent. "We're all keeping an eye on BA.2 just because it has done particularly well in some parts of the world," including parts of Asia, Africa and Europe, said Dr. Wesley Long, a pathologist at Houston Methodist in Texas. This week, a technical advisory group for the World Health Organization advised public health authorities to monitor it as a distinct omicron strain.

Early research suggests it spreads faster than the original omicron and in rare cases can sicken people even if they've already had an omicron infection. There's mixed research on whether it causes more severe disease, but vaccines appear just as effective against it.

Overall cases are falling in some places where the variant is becoming more prevalent, offering some hope that the latest troubling version of the virus won't send cases skyrocketing again as experts try to learn more.

WORLDWIDE SPREAD
BA.2 has been found in more than 80 countries and all 50 U.S. states.

In a recent report, the WHO said BA.2 was dominant in 18 countries and it



This 2020 electron microscope image made available by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases shows a Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 particle isolated from a patient, in a laboratory in Fort Detrick, Md.

Associated Press

represented about 36% of sequenced omicron cases submitted in the most recent week to a publicly available international database where scientists share coronavirus data. That's up from 19% two weeks earlier.

In the United States, BA.2 caused about 4% of COVID cases during the week ending Feb. 19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The percentage was lower in some regions and higher in others — hitting about 7% in New England.

WHAT'S KNOWN
BA.2 has lots of mutations. It's been dubbed "stealth" because it lacks a genetic quirk of the original omicron that allowed health officials to rapidly differentiate it from delta using a certain PCR test. So while the test can detect a BA.2 infection, it looks like a delta infection.

Initial research suggests BA.2 is more transmissible than the original omicron — about 30% more contagious by one estimate.

But vaccines can protect people from getting sick. Scientists in the United Kingdom found that they pro-

vide the same level of protection from both types of omicron.

A bout with the original omicron also seems to provide "strong protection" against reinfection with BA.2, according to early studies cited by the WHO. But getting BA.2 after infection from the original omicron strain is possible, says new research out of Denmark. Study authors noted 187 total reinfections, including 47 with BA.2 occurring shortly after a bout the original strain, mostly in young, unvaccinated people with mild disease. They concluded that such reinfections do occur but are rare. Like other early studies on BA.2, this one has been posted online but not reviewed by independent scientists.

DOES BA.2 MAKE YOU SICKER?

A Japanese lab study suggests that it could, based on experiments with hamsters. Researchers concluded that the risk for global health "is potentially higher" from BA.2 and proposed that it be given its own Greek letter — a designation for globally significant "variants of concern." WHO's technical group said BA.2 should remain under the omicron umbrella. Though the severity experiments were conducted in animals, the study is "not something to discount," said Dr. Eric Topol of Scripps Research Translational Institute. "We should keep an open mind and keep assessing this." □

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Drought, pesticides take a toll on Chile's crucial honeybees



Bees pillage another colony at beekeeper Marco Peralta's farm in Colina, on the outskirts of Santiago, Chile, Sunday, Jan. 30, 2022.

Associated Press

By EVA VERGARA
Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — A drought has gripped Chile for 13 years and the flowers that fed Carlos Peralta's honeybees around the central town of Colina have grown increasingly scarce.

He said he had lost about 300 hives since the start of November and was left with a choice: try to keep the 900 that remained alive with an artificial nectar or move them to a place where flowers and pollen are more abundant.

"If the bees die, we all die. ... The bee is life," he said, referring to the insects' key role in pollinating plants both wild and commercial, helping Chile maintain its role as a major fruit exporter.

So Peralta decided to move his operations some 600 miles (1,000 kilome-

ters) to the south, to Puerto Montt.

Andrés González, a regional expert on biodiversity for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, said a reduced population of pollinating insects "has to do ... with the use of pesticides and fertilizers, monocultures, droughts caused in great part by climate change and by bad management of (water) resources."

Those factors, along with parasites, have hit bee populations globally. And Chile has seen its exports of honey plunge over the past four or five years — a decline also aggravated by transport difficulties caused by the pandemic. Marco Peralta chose to stay in Colina rather than join his brother Carlos in the south, saying he feared losing bees to pesticides if he moved.

An FAO study in 2018 found that Chilean imports of pesticides had grown by 460% over the previous two decades — a favor beekeepers blame for part of their losses.

"You enter an orchard with your bees and you don't know if you'll come out with living bees or dead ones," said Carlos Peralta. His brother Marco has been feeding his bees with sugar water augmented with other nutrients — though

that leaves them unable to produce honey.

"The bees grow weak (with sugar water). It's like eating just pasta every day," said Mario Flores, a beekeeper in the southern town of Temuco.

Teresa Sarmiento, president of a beekeepers' association in Colina, compared it to "giving a sweet to a hungry child." □

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GOLD SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON

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2 Bed Ocean view \$18,500
1 Bed ocean front \$17,500
1 Bed Ocean View \$12,000
GOLD SEASON
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2 Bed Ocean view \$9,500
1 Bed oceanfront \$9,000
1 Bed ocean View \$6,500

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Noord	527 3200
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Decades later, gay country pioneers Lavender Country return

By KRISTIN M. HALL

AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In 1973, amid the growing gay rights movement, a band called Lavender Country recorded a country music album that unabashedly explored LGBTQ themes, becoming a landmark that would nonetheless disappear for decades.

Led by singer-songwriter Patrick Haggerty, the self-titled album was created by a collective of activists, singers and musicians with ribald songs focused on LGBTQ people, like "Back in the Closet Again" and "Come Out Singing," as well as an explicit song bashing straight men that has since become a cult favorite.

Nearly 50 years later, Lavender Country is back with a sophomore record that connects today's LGBTQ country musicians to historical roots in activism and social change.

Haggerty, now 78, grew up on a tenant dairy farm about 100 miles west of Seattle in the Olympic Peninsula, one of 10 children. As a young man in the 1970s, Haggerty was heavily involved in radical gay rights activism, spurred by the Stonewall rebellion in New York City. The idea for a record was a collective one, with Haggerty joining up with his friends to write lyrics, play the instruments and collect money to book studio time.



Patrick Haggerty, second from right, the founder and lead singer of Lavender Country, poses for a photo, Friday, Feb. 18, 2022, at his home in Bremerton, Wash., with some of the musicians in his band, Jack Moriarity, left, Lolo Marie, second from left, and Bobby Inocente, right.

Associated Press

"'Lavender Country' had no commercial value when we made it because it was too outlandish. But it was really too outlandish for any genre," said Haggerty. "So we didn't have any choice except to make it ourselves and the community of folks who were doing Stonewall rebellion stuff in Seattle."

The self-titled album "Lavender Country" had little initial impact outside of the Seattle gay community. It sold about 1,000 copies, Haggerty estimates, mostly by running ads in underground magazines, and he and his friends spent a couple of years doing Lavender Country shows in the area. But after a few years,

the album and the group were mostly forgotten.

"There was a little wound in my heart about the fact that Lavender Country was dead and wasn't ever going to go anywhere and nobody was ever going to listen to it," Haggerty said. "But it turned out that I was wrong." Haggerty moved on with his life, marrying his boyfriend, raising a family and continuing to be politically active. For a while he and his friends would travel around to senior living homes and sing classics for residents.

Around 1999, an editor at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum discovered Lavender Country and

reached out to Haggerty to include the album in a roundup of gay-themed country music. A few years later, even though the original album had been out of print for decades, someone uploaded a copy of one of the original songs to YouTube.

That YouTube link made its way to a music collector, who brought the album to the attention of a record label called Paradise of Bachelors, which reached out to Haggerty by surprise one day.

The label reissued "Lavender Country" in 2014 to a much wider audience, and the album that was now four decades old still felt

timely as the legal battle for same-sex marriage was unfolding. The re-release was reviewed in national publications and named a best new reissue by Pitchfork.

Suddenly Haggerty's dream of being a country star that he thought was long dead had been revived. The album was made into a ballet in San Francisco and he met and collaborated with artists like Trixie Mattel and Orville Peck.

Queer country artist Paisley Fields was one of those people drawn to Haggerty after the first album was re-released. "That album changed my life in a way, because I felt more emboldened and empowered and able to speak freely about myself and who I am because he did," they said. "And that's what great artists do."

Paisley Fields toured with Lavender Country and was invited to play on the band's sophomore record, "Blackberry Rose and Other Songs & Sorrows," released last week, on Don Giovanni Records.

"Blackberry Rose" again is a collaborative effort, and includes one of the original 1973 Lavender Country songwriters, Robert Hammerstrom, as well as more than a dozen other songwriters, singers and musicians. Fields said recording the second album felt like being welcomed into a group of old friends. □



Sean Penn arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "Flag Day" in Los Angeles on Aug. 11, 2021.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Film-maker and actor Sean

Sean Penn in Ukraine to continue work on documentary

Penn is in Ukraine to continue work on a documentary about the ongoing Russian assault.

The Office of the President wrote in a Facebook post Thursday that Penn attended press briefings, met with Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk and spoke to journalists and military personnel about the Russian invasion.

"Sean Penn demonstrates the courage that many others, especially western politicians lack," the

president's office wrote on Facebook. "The director specially came to Kiev to record all the events that are currently happening in Ukraine and to tell the world the truth about Russia's invasion of our country."

He was also there in late November to work on the project, which is being produced by VICE Studios. Photographs at the time showed him visiting the frontlines of the Ukrainian Armed Forces near the

Donetsk region.

The Oscar-winner has been involved in numerous international humanitarian and anti-war efforts over the years and founded the non-profit disaster relief organization CORE in response to the 2010 earthquakes in Haiti, chronicled in the documentary "Citizen Penn."

A representative for Penn did not immediately respond to request for comment. VICE Studios had no immediate comment. □

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U.S. women win SheBelieves Cup title, beating Iceland 5-0



U.S. forward Catarina Macario, who won the SheBelieves Cup MVP award, hoists the SheBelieves Cup trophy while joined by teammates after their 5-0 win over Iceland in a soccer match Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022, in Frisco, Texas.

Associated Press

FRISCO, Texas (AP) — Catarina Macario and Mallory Pugh each scored two goals and the U.S. women's national team beat Iceland 5-0 on Wednesday night to win the SheBelieves Cup. The Americans won the annual four-team tournament, now in its seventh year, for the third straight year. The United States has 17th straight shutouts on American soil, dating to March 2020. The national team also is unbeaten in 65 straight games at home. Kristie Mewis also scored in the victory that came as the team celebrated an agreement with U.S. Soccer to settle a dispute over equitable pay with the men's national team. The two sides announced the agreement early Tuesday. Under the terms, U.S. Soccer will pay the \$24 million and commit to equitable pay and bonuses in the future. The women filed a lawsuit alleging gender discrimination in 2019. The deal is contingent on a new collective bargaining agreement. The two sides are currently in negotia-

tions following the Dec. 31 expiration of the last CBA. Many of the veterans from the national team, including Alex Moran, Megan Rapinoe, Christen Press and Tobin Heath, were not on the roster for the SheBelieves Cup as coach Vlatko Andonovski looked at younger players ahead of World Cup qualifying this summer. "We're performing well, there's still a lot of room for improvement and growth in this group," Andonovski said. "But I feel we can all see the potential. I said this before, it's a process, it's going to take time. I'm very happy with the result, very happy with the players, but realistically this is still not good enough. We still have to get better and better as we go forward." Macario scored in the 37th minute with a blast from the top corner of the box that bounced off the post and into the net. Making her third straight start in the tournament, Macario navigated a tough angle for her second goal into the far corner in

the 45th minute. She has five international goals in 15 appearances.

Pugh added a goal in the 60th off a pass from Ashley Sanchez, then took a pass from Macario for her second in the 75th. Pugh has 21 goals and 21 assists in 70 matches with the United States.

"The pass Cat gave me doesn't get better than that," Pugh said. "I think she sees the game so well, and knows exactly what to do, and put it right at my foot so I was able to score. I think as a whole, we came out and we needed to win, and 'm really proud of all the players that contributed to this game."

Mewis added the final goal in the 88th minute.

Iceland went into the game atop the four-team SheBelieves table with a pair of wins over New Zealand and the Czech Republic. The United States was in second with a scoreless draw against the Czech Republic in the opener and a 5-0 victory over New Zealand on Sunday, needing the win against Iceland to claim the tournament title.

"I think that we started off the tournament a little slow, but we ended up on top, and I think it just embodied some of the grit and that USA mentality that we needed to have," Pugh said. "And we got some good experience."

Earlier Wednesday, New Zealand and the Czech Republic played to a scoreless draw at Toyota Stadium. Temperatures were in the 20s for both games. Iceland has never won an international tournament. It was second in the 2007 Algarve Cup. □

NYC Marathon returning to 50,000 runner field in November



Runners cross the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge during the New York City Marathon on Sunday, Nov. 4, 2018, in New York.

Associated Press

By **JAKE SEINER**
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York City Marathon will return to full capacity with 50,000 runners this year after the race was canceled in 2020 and limited last fall due to the coronavirus. The announcement for the Nov. 6 event was made Thursday by New York Road Runners, which operates the marathon. After the 2019 NYC Marathon set a world record with 53,627 finishers, the 2020 race was called off that June as the city dealt with a public health crisis created by COVID-19. The marathon returned for its 50th running in November with a shrunken field of 25,010 runners, all of whom were required to show either proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test within 48 hours of the race. Spectators were encouraged to maintain social distancing, and some race-adjacent entertainment elements were scaled back.

Organizers hope the 2022 race will bring the event back to its former standard, including the restoration of on-course entertainment throughout the five-borough course. Runners will have to show proof of full vaccination to enter.

"Every year, runners from all over the world come to New York City because there's no better race than the New York City Marathon," New York Mayor Eric Adams said in a statement released by NYRR. "This race is the strongest proof of New York's unrelenting spirit and determination, and we are proud to announce that, this year, we'll be back at full capacity." NYRR will open an entry drawing for runners in March. There are also chances to enroll via charities and fundraising associated with the marathon. Runners slated to participate in the canceled 2020 race were given the option to re-enter in 2021, 2022 or 2023. □

MLB: Season to be shortened if no deal by end of Monday



Major League Baseball Players Association executive director Tony Clark, left, and chief negotiator Bruce Meyer arrive for contract negotiations at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla., Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022.

Associated Press

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

JUPITER, Fla. (AP) — Major League Baseball said only five days remain to salvage March 31 openers and a

full season, telling locked out players that games would be canceled if a labor contract is not agreed to by the end of Monday. After the third straight day

of negotiations with little movement, MLB went public with what it had told the union on Feb. 12.

"A deadline is a deadline. Missed games are missed games. Salary will not be paid for those games," an MLB spokesman said after Wednesday's bargaining ended. The spokesman spoke on behalf of MLB on the condition the spokesman not be identified by name.

Players have not accepted Monday as a deadline and have suggested any missed games could be made up as part of doubleheaders, a method MLB said it will not agree to.

The union told MLB if games are missed and salaries are lost, clubs should not expect players to agree to

management's proposals to expand the postseason and to allow advertisements on uniforms and helmets.

Bargaining is scheduled to continue Thursday, and both sides said they are prepared to meet through Monday.

A shortened season would be baseball's second in three years following a 2020 schedule cut from 162 games to 60 because of the coronavirus pandemic. The last seasons truncated by labor strife were during the strike that ended the 1994 schedule on Aug. 12 and caused the start of the following season to be delayed from April 2 to April 25. The 1995 schedule was reduced from 162 games to 144.

Players are paid only during the regular season, accruing 1/162nd of their salary daily. Players would be subject to losing as much as \$232,975 daily in the case of Mets pitcher Max Scherzer, or as little as \$3,441 for a player at a \$640,000 minimum.

Baseball's work stoppage was in its 84th day, and the three sessions this week increased the total on core economic issues to just nine since the lockout began Dec. 2.

Spring training workouts had been scheduled to start on Feb. 16, and MLB already has canceled the first week of exhibitions, which were to begin Friday.

Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said on Feb. 10 a minimum of four weeks of training are needed before starting the season. A deal by Monday would allow that plus a few days for players to report to camps in Arizona and Florida.

Manfred has spoken publicly just once since the day the lockout began and union head Tony Clark not at all.

MLB's public statement was interpreted as a pressure tactic by the union, which was angered payrolls decreased during the expired five-year deal and an increased number of teams jettisoned higher-salaries veterans and transitioned to rebuilding mode.

"To get bears in the forest, you can't offer them bear traps," said Scott Boras, agent for five of eight players on the union's executive subcommittee.

A day after the union made only small moves in response to management's incremental proposal of a day earlier, MLB advanced only one change: Teams offered to increase the minimum salary from \$570,500 to \$640,000, up from their previous proposal of \$630,000. The minimum would increase by an additional \$10,000 each season during a five-year agreement. Clubs withdrew their proposal for a tiered minimum, which players opposed. □

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